



U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE



Cover photo: A man identified as Georgy Oganezov is forcibly detained by Russian riot police in Moscow on August 3, 2019, while being interviewed on Current Time. Photo: Andrei Zolotov (MBKh Media)

This report is submitted pursuant to Section 305(a) of the International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-236).

Overview and Impact	2
Mission	3
Languages	3
Audience	4
Networks	6
Independence	9
Threats to Our Journalists	10
Imprisoned and Missing Journalists	14
Transmissions and Broadcasting	16
Radio	17
TV	17
Digital (Web and Social Media Platforms)	18
Affiliates	18
Internet Freedom	20
Providing Public Service Media	22
Impartial News Coverage	23
Unique Programming	28
A Forum for Discussion	33
Reflects Underrepresented Voices	37
Media Development	44
Outreach and Research	46
Leadership	50
Chief Executive Officer	51
Board of Governors	52
Awards	55
Financial Highlights	64

OVERVIEW & IMPACT

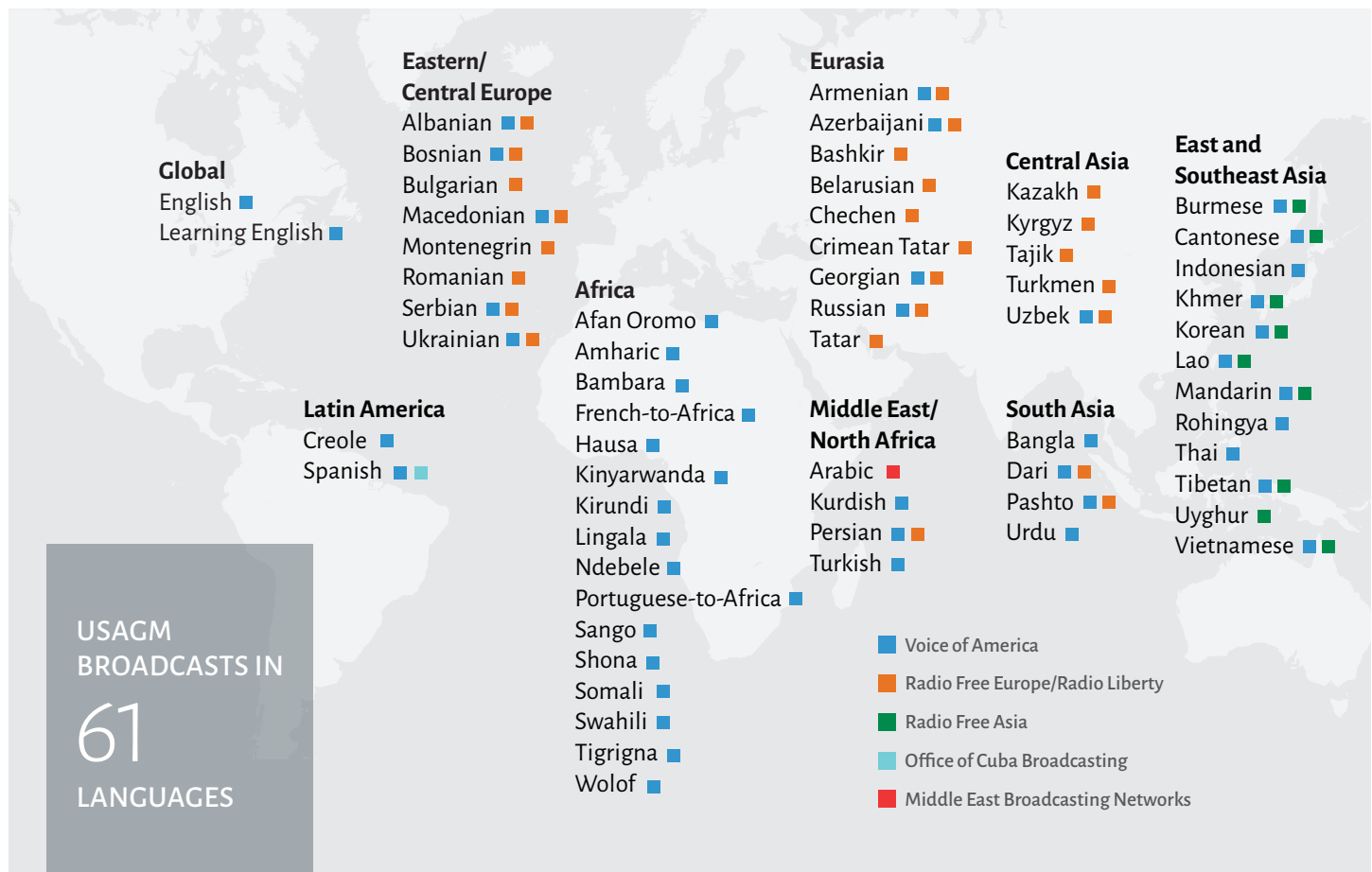


The U.S. Agency for Global Media is an independent federal agency whose mission is “to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.”

USAGM was formed in 1999 and oversees all U.S. non-military international broadcasting. USAGM’s networks—Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB)—together reach 350 million people each week in more than 100 countries. USAGM also funds internet freedom technologies to ensure that the

agency’s journalists and its audiences have the tools they need to safely access the uncensored internet.

USAGM’s international operations promote democracy and press freedom and counter misinformation and propaganda. In doing so, they serve a vital role in U.S. public diplomacy and national security.



Left: Khin Phyu Htway of VOA’s Burmese Service reporting on a USAID- and Windrock International-supported development program ringing together 18 coffee-producing local communities in Shan State, northern Burma.



VOA reporter reports from Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley.

Audience

In 2019, USAGM networks attracted 350 million people weekly worldwide via radio, television, and internet.

In keeping with standards developed by the Conference of International Broadcasters' Audience Research Services (CIBAR), USAGM measures and reports unduplicated audience—the number of “unique” individuals who access content. In other words, the agency counts a person only once, regardless of how many programs they see or hear or how many platforms they use over the course of a week. This is a conservative approach to quantifying audience.

The reported total audience for a broadcaster is often smaller than the sum of its audience on each platform,

and USAGM global audience is smaller than the sum of audiences for all individual networks.

The audience estimate is based on surveys

- conducted within the past five years;
- in more than 100 countries and territories; and
- that represent 3 billion people in markets around the globe.

More information about the Verification and Validation of Performance Measures can be found in the [2019 Performance and Accountability Report](#).

WORLDWIDE OPERATIONS

50

Overseas bureaus and production centers

1,500

Stringers/reporters

Nearly

200

Operational transmitters for TV, FM, MW & SW at 100 transmission sites in over 40 countries worldwide

USAGM AUDIENCE BY MEDIA PLATFORM AND PERCENTAGE GROWTH SINCE 2015



TV

+42%

201 MILLION

+36%

139 MILLION



RADIO



DIGITAL

+297%

127 MILLION

+55%

350 MILLION



UNDUPLICATED AUDIENCE ACROSS ALL MEDIA

AFFILIATES

68

Number of USAGM affiliates with national reach that air custom or interactive segments during prime time

Over

3,700

television, radio, and digital affiliates across the globe

ANNUAL BUDGET
\$807.9 million

EMPLOYEES
3,561

LANGUAGES
61

AUDIENCE
350 million











DIGITAL GROWTH
23 million

Weekly Average
Web & Mobile Visits

Social Media EXPANSION

USAGM networks engage with audiences on:

Facebook 
Twitter 
YouTube 
Instagram 
OK.ru 
VKontakte 
WhatsApp 
WeChat 

Networks

USAGM networks bring news and information to people around the world in 61 languages. Every week, they together produce more than 3,000 hours of original programming, which is accessed by more than 350 million listeners, viewers, and internet users in more than 100 countries.

Each USAGM network plays both a unique and complementary role. While all five networks offer international news pertinent to their particular audiences, RFE/RL, RFA, and OCB specifically emphasize domestic affairs in their programming. More often than not, these networks are the sole source of unbiased local news in their respective regions.

VOA focuses on providing international and regional news as well as in-depth coverage of U.S. affairs to its audiences. VOA also covers affairs that are domestic to overseas audiences to ensure comprehensive coverage, especially in areas where it is the only USAGM network, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

MBN provides a full range of international, regional, and local news in Arabic in addition to consistent coverage of U.S. affairs.

Reasey Poch from VOA Khmer anchors a Facebook Live segment for audiences in Cambodia from VOA's Washington studios.





Voice of America

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$250.1 million

EMPLOYEES: 1,078

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: 47

AUDIENCE ESTIMATE: 280.9 million

VOA, a USAGM federal network, provides trusted and objective news and information in 47 languages to a measured weekly audience of more than 280.9 million people around the world. In 1976, the VOA Charter was signed into law to protect the integrity of its programming and to define its mission. For 78 years now, VOA journalists have delivered news and information to people living in places where information is restricted. Using a wide variety of platforms, VOA connects audiences on five continents with the people, ideas, and institutions that make America unique.

In 2019, VOA added the words “A Free Press Matters” to its logo and adopted the tagline across all of its broadcast services in an effort to support international audiences living in environments where freedom of expression is limited.

VOA uses digital content and mobile platforms to engage viewers, listeners, and users. Its radio and television programs are distributed by approximately 2,600 affiliates and satellite transmissions to countries where free speech is banned or civil society is under threat.

With the largest audience of all USAGM networks, VOA continues to be a beacon of hope for audiences who yearn not only for unbiased news and information, but also freedom of expression itself.



Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$124.1 million

EMPLOYEES: 623

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: 26

AUDIENCE ESTIMATE: 37.6 million

RFE/RL is a USAGM grantee that serves as a critical media source in countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, where a free press is either not fully established or fully banned by the government. The network provides uncensored news

and fosters responsible discussion and open debate. In 2019, RFE/RL produced content in 26 languages in 22 countries across Eastern and Central Europe, Central Asia, and Southwest Asia. RFE/RL also runs Current Time, a 24/7 TV and digital network for Russian-speakers around the world.

RFE/RL's programming focuses on local and regional developments in places impacted by government intimidation, censorship, political repression, economic hardship, ethnic and religious intolerance, and violent extremism. RFE/RL operates on TV and radio as well as on all digital platforms—matching the modality to the market.

The scope of RFE/RL's newsgathering operations is unmatched in its broadcast regions, with headquarters in Prague, 20 local news bureaus, and an extensive freelance network. This proximity to audiences allows RFE/RL to produce compelling, locally-reported programming in a cost-effective manner.



Office of Cuba Broadcasting

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$29.1 million

EMPLOYEES: 117

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: Spanish

AUDIENCE ESTIMATE: 1.0 million

OCB, a USAGM federal network, oversees Radio Televisión Martí at its headquarters in Miami, Florida. The Martí's constitute a multimedia hub of news, information, and analysis that provides the people of Cuba with interactive programs seven days a week through satellite television and shortwave and AM radio, as well as through flash drives, emails, DVDs, and SMS text.

Combined with the online platform, martinoticias.com, the Martí's form a one-of-a-kind service that brings unbiased, objective information to over a million Cubans.



Radio Free Asia

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$44.2 million

EMPLOYEES: 253

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: 9

AUDIENCE ESTIMATE: 50.7 million

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with eight bureaus and offices overseas, RFA is a USAGM grantee. It brings award-winning, domestic journalism and uncensored content to people in six Asian countries that restrict free speech, freedom of the press, and access to reliable information. RFA also provides educational and cultural programming as well as forums for the free exchange of ideas and opinions.

Working in areas with some of the world's most restrictive regimes, RFA uses on-the-ground reporters and stringers in addition to vast networks of in-country sources, citizen journalists, and eyewitnesses. These individuals provide leads and tips in the form of verbal communication, images, and video — often at great personal risk — to ensure that their fellow citizens receive accurate and timely news and information about the events impacting their lives.



Middle East Broadcasting Networks

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$110.3 million

EMPLOYEES: 869

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: Arabic

AUDIENCE ESTIMATE: 33.2 million

MBN, a USAGM grantee, is a 24/7 multimedia broadcaster providing news, information, and analysis in Arabic to audiences across the Middle East and North Africa via television, radio, websites, and social media. It is headquartered in northern Virginia, but its efforts are supported by a regional hub in Dubai and bureaus in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunis. MBN is an objective and trustworthy line of communication to the people of the Middle East and North Africa, offering a spectrum of perspectives not otherwise available in the region's media.

MBN uniquely provides audiences with analyses of local and domestic issues, in-depth coverage of U.S. topics relevant to the region, and information about the diversity of the American people and their culture.



Open Technology Fund

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$20 million

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED: 200

AUDIENCE SUPPORTED: 2+ billion

OTF funds internet freedom technologies at every stage of the development cycle from proof-of-concept, to on-the-ground deployments, to multi-year efforts. This approach ensures that USAGM journalists and audiences have the tools they need right now to safely access the uncensored internet, while investing in innovative solutions to stay ahead of evolving censorship threats. In order to provide comprehensive support to internet freedom projects, OTF provides resources through a variety of tools.

Independence

An essential guarantee of the journalistic credibility of U.S. global media content is the firewall enshrined in USAGM's enabling legislation, the U.S. International Broadcasting Act.

The firewall prohibits interference by U.S. government officials, including the USAGM's Chief Executive Officer, in the objective, independent reporting of news by USAGM networks (VOA, RFE/RL, RFA, MBN, and Radio and TV Martí), thereby safeguarding the ability of USAGM journalists to develop content that reflects the highest professional standards of journalism, free of political interference.

USAGM reforms contained in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 maintained the longstanding statutory firewall language protecting the professional independence of USAGM journalists.

The firewall is not meant to discourage USAGM journalists from interviewing government officials, or USG officials from appearing on USAGM programs. But the firewall is critical to ensure that USAGM journalists and editors can make the final decisions on what stories to cover, and how they are covered.



VOA Afghanistan reporter Ahmad Shikib reports from Washington, D.C.



THREATS TO OUR JOURNALISTS

*Police detained RFE/RL reporter Pyotr Trotsenko
near the site of a protest in Almaty against
Kazakhstan's June 2019 presidential elections*

Journalists' safety is paramount. Yet USAGM journalists often face harassment, threats, and imprisonment by state and non-state actors in the course of their work. Below is a sample of the threats they braved as they uncovered the truth about some of 2019's most significant stories and events. For a comprehensive look, please visit [USAGM.gov](https://www.usagm.gov).

SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS

The Iraqi government suspended the license of MBN's Alhurra Baghdad bureau after it released an investigative report on corruption within several of the country's religious institutions. Journalist rights organizations were quick to condemn the action, citing freedom of the press.

CREDENTIALS DENIED IN TAJIKISTAN

RFE/RL journalists in Dushanbe have been repeatedly denied accreditation by the Tajik government, despite advocacy by members of the U.S. Congress

and international media advocacy organizations and the social media campaign #LetThemWork. Without Foreign Ministry accreditation, it is illegal for Radio Ozodi journalists to perform their work as one of the lone uncensored voices in Tajikistan, an autocratic country.

JOURNALISTS DEEMED FOREIGN AGENTS IN RUSSIA

In December 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed new legislation allowing the Russian government to label individual journalists working for foreign media outlets as "foreign agents." This was widely seen as an

attempt to silence and undermine independent media. Both VOA and RFE/RL had already been designated "foreign agents" by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017, in an attempt to discredit the two networks.

ATTACKS ON RFE/RL JOURNALISTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

RFE/RL journalists in Kazakhstan were subject to censorship in the form of detention and physical assault in no fewer than 10 incidents while reporting on public protests that took place following the resignation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Unidentified men wearing masks and carrying umbrellas often perpetrated the attacks while local police stood by, refusing to intervene.

VOA REPORTER BEATEN UNTIL ATTACKERS LEARNED HE WAS WITH VOA

VOA Afaan Oromo reporter Muktar Jemal was severely beaten on October 25 by demonstrators while covering a funeral following violent protests in Adama, a city in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. His



Radio Ozodi journalists

attackers only stopped assaulting him once they discovered his VOA press credential. His smartphone and recording equipment were stolen along with his wallet and valuables. Muktar was hospitalized for injuries to his head and back. USAGM's Employee Association raised funds to help cover his medical bills.

VOA MANDARIN CAUGHT IN HONG KONG CLASHES

VOA Mandarin reporter Yihua Lee was caught between pro-democracy protesters and police in Hong Kong when police fired tear gas into the crowd. Correspondent Dahai Han was taken to a hospital after being struck by a tear gas canister during a police crackdown of protestors.

Despite displaying press credentials, VOA Mandarin reporters have encountered hostility from some protestors who have mistaken them for pro-Chinese Communist Party media.

VOA SPANISH REPORTERS TARGETED IN VENEZUELA AND NICARAGUA

VOA reporters in Venezuela and Nicaragua have been subjected to government harassment, including temporary detention and questioning by authorities.

RFA/BENARNEWS TARGETED DIGITALLY

USAGM journalists are threatened not just in person, but also online. In 2019, more than 80 percent of the emails sent to RFA's BenarNews were

deemed threats while 1.62 million invalid attempts to connect to their email servers were blocked.

VOA IN BURUNDI FORBIDDEN FROM REPORTING

A 2019 decision by Burundi's Communications Commission extended the 2018 suspension of VOA FM programming. Before the suspension, VOA content reached 57 percent of Burundian adults each week, 90 percent of whom reported trusting the news service.



Footage from Faheem (Zana) Omer's video of a car bomb in Qamishli, Syria, that destroyed his car and recording equipment.

RFE/RL JOURNALIST DETAINED FOR REPORTING

Veteran RFE/RL correspondent Saniya Toiken was detained five separate times between March and June on fabricated charges while covering protest rallies in both the restive Kazakh city of Zhanaozen and Kazakhstan's capital, Nur-Sultan. Toiken is the recipient of the International Women's Media Foundation's 2017 Courage in Journalism Award.

VOA JOURNALIST RISKS LIFE TO COVER THE NEWS

VOA Kurdish stringer Faheem (Zana) Omer was reporting on a car bombing in the largely Kurdish city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria when another car bomb exploded close by. The attack reportedly killed at least three civilians and wounded nine more. Fortunately, Omer was not injured in the blast, but his car with all his recording equipment was destroyed.



Uon Chhin (L) and Yeang Sothearin (R) speak with reporters outside the Phnom Penh Municipal Court in Phnom Penh, Aug. 30, 2019 (RFA)

FORMER RFA REPORTERS CAUGHT IN LEGAL LIMBO

Former RFA journalists Yeang Sothearin and Uon Chhin appealed a court ruling that espionage charges against them should be reinvestigated. The two were arrested after RFA was forced to close its Phnom Penh bureau in the fall of 2017. Despite a judge's ruling on insufficient evidence, Sothearin and Chhin remain trapped in a legal quagmire.

Imprisoned and Missing Journalists

PHAM CHI DUNG

Pham Chi Dung was arrested in November in Ho Chi Minh City for “dangerous actions” against the Hanoi government. He had been writing a weekly blog for VOA and was the president of the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam. The Ministry of Public Security accused him of “fabricating, storing and disseminating information, as well as other materials” that oppose the government. It is the second time he has faced these allegations. If found guilty, Dung could face a prison sentence of five to 20 years.

LEANH HUNG

VOA contributor Le Anh Hung remains in prison since his arrest on July 5, 2018, on the charge of “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the



Le Anh Hung

State, lawful rights and interests of organizations and/or citizens” under Article 331 of Vietnam’s 2015 Penal Code. If convicted, he could serve up to seven years in prison.

TRUONG DUY NHAT

Truong Day Nhat is a Vietnamese RFA blogger who went missing after submitting a UN asylum application from Thailand in January 2019. It was later discovered that he was in a Hanoi prison — news that brought well-founded suspicions that he had been abducted and handed over to Vietnam, raising fears for the safety of other Vietnamese dissidents hiding in Thailand.



Truong Duy Nhat

NGUYỄN VĂN HOÁ

Nguyễn Văn Hoá, an RFA Vietnam cameraman, endured a 12-day hunger strike in prison to protest

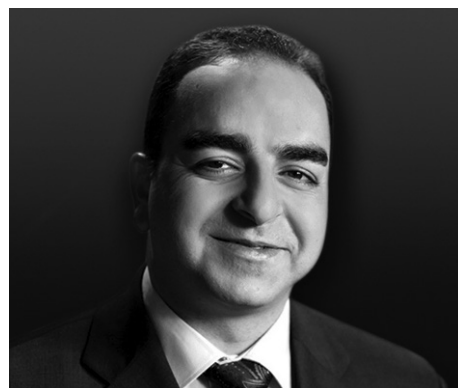


Nguyễn Văn Hoá

beatings by police and prison guards. Hoá is serving a seven-year prison term for his coverage of an environmental disaster.

BASHAR FAHMI

On August 20, 2012, Alhurra Television correspondent Bashar Fahmi went missing in the Suleiman Halabi neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. There has been no word of his whereabouts or well-being since.



Bashar Fahmi

RFE/RL JOURNALISTS RELEASED

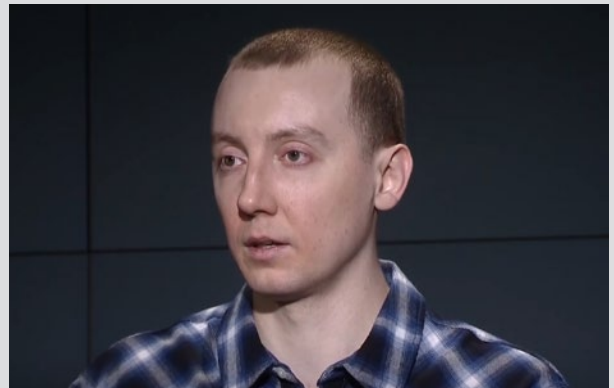
Two contributors to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service who were taken captive by Russia-backed separatists in 2017 because of their reporting from Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region were released on December 29, 2019.

Stanislav Aseyev, who contributed to RFE/RL's Donbas. Realii reporting unit, was held incommunicado in Donetsk since the summer of 2017. A published author and member of PEN Ukraine, he was alleged to have been sentenced by a separatist-controlled court to 15 years in a penal colony on extremism and terrorism-related charges in a case that became emblematic of the Russia-backed conflict.

RFE/RL contributor Oleh Halaziuk was also detained by Russia-backed separatists in Donetsk in 2017 and was held incommunicado until his release.

The release of Aseyev and Halaziuk came as part of an exchange between the separatists and Ukrainian authorities involving dozens of prisoners from both sides of the fighting.

RFE/RL Crimea-based contributor Mykola Semena was released from house arrest, after he was cleared of all charges in a case that became synonymous with Russia's efforts to silence independent voices on the peninsula.



Stanislav Aseyev, top, and Oleh Halaziuk, above, speak to RFE/RL about their imprisonments.



Mykola Semena

TRANSMISSIONS & BROADCASTING



*VOA Mandarin Service White House Correspondent
Paris Huang attending and reporting the Signing
Ceremony of the Phase One US-China Trade Deal.*

USAGM manages a diverse and complex distribution system, which includes traditional radio transmissions, direct-to-home (DTH) satellite TV delivery, thousands of affiliate stations, and other platforms.

The way audiences access and consume media is always evolving, with the internet, social media, and other digital platforms requiring not only new forms of content, but also new ways of delivering them. USAGM's Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation (TSI) strives to make USAGM content available anytime, anywhere, and on any device, while maintaining traditional platforms—such as shortwave radio—in places where they are still depended upon by critical audiences. In 2019, TSI continued to invest in new approaches while realigning its global network to more effectively and efficiently use U.S. taxpayer money.

Radio

USAGM's radio audiences continue to grow overall. However, the use of cross-border radio (shortwave, or "SW," and medium wave, or "MW") has been in decline in most parts of the world for years. USAGM has responded to this trend by consolidating broadcasts to more cost-effective transmitting stations and reducing, or even eliminating, MW or SW where they are no longer impactful.

In 2019, USAGM terminated MW transmission of RFE/RL's Radio Farda to Iran after the Iranian government's persistent jamming made the signal increasingly ineffective. The agency also relocated Radio Sawa MW transmissions to a more cost-effective site. Further, USAGM closed its MW transmission facility in Poro, Philippines after a lengthy formal termination process with the government.

In markets where cross-border radio retains a sizable, valuable audience, such as in Africa and parts of Central

Asia and the Middle East, TSI has made these services available in the most cost-effective way possible.

USAGM's SW transmissions to North Korea and other parts of East Asia were badly affected in October 2018 when a major typhoon knocked over all the antenna systems at the transmission station on Saipan and Tinian, the main islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), a U.S. territory. RFA broadcasts to North Korea and China were particularly impacted. In 2019 the station's crew made tremendous progress in restoring services from CNMI, managing to salvage and rebuild about a third of the station's overall capability. That effort will continue in 2020.

FM radio remains a very popular platform in many places around the world, particularly in Africa. In 2019, TSI worked with VOA to investigate options for expanding the network's presence on FM in key markets across the continent. Also, MBN refocused its Radio Sawa FM broadcasts on critical areas of the Levant and Sudan while it shuttered other FM streams in order to invest more in its digital presence. VOA took over programming in several countries, including in Sudan, Mauritania, and Libya.

TV

In 2019, TSI's Global Networks division continued to modernize USAGM's distribution technology in order to further ensure that agency content reaches audiences as efficiently and reliably as possible. Today, as well as in the future, that means making certain that USAGM's wide range of content is available to audiences anytime, anywhere, and on myriad devices.

One important step in this effort was rethinking the agency's use of satellite services.

Today, satellite service providers offer a coordinated stack of capabilities that simplify distribution from master control rooms directly to satellites. As a result, USAGM has been able to migrate from operating its own costly global fiber optic network, teleports, and leased satellite space segments to integrated, highly-targeted platform solutions that offer increased reliability at a lower cost.

As part of this migration, TSI laid the groundwork to utilize an off-site data center and Wide Area Network (WAN) hub, creating a faster and more reliable third-party distribution network. This will allow USAGM to ensure better, more consistent, and more economical access to its content for audiences and affiliates. The move will also help TSI transition USAGM from linear content distribution to file-based content distribution. It will further allow the agency to consolidate and take advantage of the economies of scale offered by hybrid cloud systems—mixtures of cloud-based and on-premises services and infrastructure.

TSI is also continuing to work with USAGM networks to place their TV content on the most popular direct-to-home (DTH) satellites that reach key audiences. For example, the following programming and content are on DTH, and can be easily accessed within their respective target regions: VOA 365, the 24/7 Persian-language global network produced by VOA in cooperation with RFE/RL; Current Time, the Russian-language channel produced by RFE/RL in cooperation with VOA; MBN's Alhurra Television and Alhurra-Iraq Television, and; VOA's Plus One and RFA's Why Not, USAGM initiatives for Mandarin

speakers that aim to counter Chinese Communist Party narratives a VOA-RFA Mandarin project.

Digital (Web and Social Media Platforms)

In late 2019, TSI began providing HD (high definition) digital video streams for social media and internet-based platforms to expand the distribution of new offerings, such as video-on-demand. TSI contracted a direct-to-consumer video, on-demand platform that launched this year. The platform allows audiences around the world to watch USAGM content on more than a dozen different devices, including Roku, Samsung Smart TVs, Android-based TVs, Apple TV, Amazon Fire, and Apple and Android mobile phones and tablets.

Affiliates

One of the most effective ways that USAGM distributes content is through partnerships with local media affiliates. TSI's Office of Business Development staff in Washington, D.C. along with regional representatives and dozens of contractors around the world, build and cultivate relationships that place USAGM content on more than 3,700 media affiliates, contributing to two-thirds of the agency's global audience.

A key accomplishment in 2019 was the placement of VOA's "Our Voices"—a half-hour English TV program focusing on African women around the world—on two dozen affiliates, a record for new programming. Another was the continued success of Current Time. The full channel is now available on more than 100 distributors in 20 countries, and over 50 additional affiliates are airing at least one of the channel's programs.



RFE/RL's Russian Service reports from the field.

In 2019, TSI helped VOA launch its first Amharic-language affiliate in Ethiopia, which has only nine commercial FM and 20 commercial TV stations. As such, this partnership gives VOA an opportunity to grow its audience significantly in the country, which is already relatively impressive on SW and MW.

In addition, the Office of Business Development added influential affiliates in markets around the world, in places where media freedom is declining, such as Venezuela, Burma, Belarus, and Turkey.



INTERNET FREEDOM

In this Tuesday, July 2, 2019 photo, an Iranian woman works on her cell phone while spending an afternoon on steps outside of a shopping mall in northern Tehran, Iran. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Around the world, repressive state actors are doubling down on their commitment to curtailing what their citizens see, read, share, and watch online. This daily suppression of freedom of expression limits all citizens' ability to take full advantage of the powerful communication platform that the internet has become. This stifles their fundamental human rights and prevents the development of open societies.

USAGM counteracts this rise in repressive government control by advancing internet freedom in the world's most closed and repressive environments. It supports the research, development and implementation of novel technologies that facilitate the free flow of information, increase at-risk users' digital security and enable free expression.

Together these shape the internet as a platform that respects fundamental human rights and reinforces core democratic values.

In November, USAGM launched a new independent grantee, the Open Technology Fund, to fund the development and distribution of cutting-edge technologies and techniques to counter efforts by Iran, China, Russia, North Korea, and others, to block access to objective news and information. Such technologies are necessary to ensure foreign audiences have access to content from USAGM's five news networks and other sources via the global internet.

USAGM developed and deployed new technical solutions in Iran to combat future internet shutdowns,

including highly innovative peer-to-peer solutions. In FY 2019, OTF supported the development of the Bypass Censorship browser extension, which delivers censorship-resistant duplicate sites allowing users to circumvent government-imposed blocks. The extension has been deployed across all USAGM entities as well as by fellow international broadcasters BBC and DW—more than 100 sites in total.

And, the agency surged support to Hong Kong for circumvention and secure communication tools, expanding digital security support and research, and increasing support for rapid response.

OTF's focus on awareness is paying dividends in Hong Kong as protestors are displaying much more sophisticated digital security practices in response to a better understanding of Chinese surveillance capabilities and threats. OTF-incubated and USAGM-funded New Node has been incorporated into Telegram to make communications more resilient for Hong Kong protestors amidst jamming, network congestion, and the potential for network shutdowns.

USAGM's Office of Internet Freedom worked in coordination with all the USAGM language services to extend the deployment of anti-censorship technologies in their broadcasting regions. Activities included creating and conducting trainings for USAGM journalists and producing promotional materials in multiple languages to raise awareness of and promote USAGM funded circumvention tools. For example, OTF provided digital security training to journalists on the ground in Venezuela, deployed circumvention and secure communication tools for tens of thousands of citizens, and assisted a network of journalists that were targeted by government-sponsored hacking attempts.

From 2018 through 2019, OTF supported Rapid Response engagements across the globe assisting at-risk individuals (journalists, human rights activists, and NGO workers) in response to digital attacks and other forms of online censorship in places such as The Gambia, DRC, Tibet, Iran, Thailand, Bahrain, Sudan, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Azerbaijan.

PROVIDING PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA



Police scuffle with protesters in Astana Square, Almaty, Kazakhstan on June 9, 2019. Photo by Pyotr Trotsenko/RFE/RL

Strong public service media are a cornerstone of democratic society. USAGM networks act as public service media in the environments in which they broadcast, providing impartial news coverage, unique programming, a forum for discussion, and representation of women, ethnic minorities, and other minority voices.

Impartial News Coverage

Repressive regimes and actors are stifling freedom of expression and producing misinformation and disinformation to an unprecedented degree. USAGM networks are pushing back by providing fair, objective coverage to millions of people around the world.

Impartial Coverage of Protests

Protests are often dangerous and difficult events to cover, but USAGM's networks provided extensive and objective content covering 2019's historic demonstrations.



Anti-government protesters clash with riot policemen during a protest against government's plans to impose new taxes, in Beirut, Lebanon, Friday, Oct. 18, 2019. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

Throughout 2019, demonstrations broke out across the Middle East and North Africa calling for changes in government leadership. In Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and Algeria, as protesters took to the streets, [MBN](#) was there to provide audiences with front-line reporting. Its networks interviewed every-day citizens along with analysts, activists, and experts to provide context and insights into the national dynamics of each country.

RFA'S BURMESE SERVICE

obtained rare access to the training camp and headquarters of the insurgent Arakan Army, which has been involved in bloody clashes with Burmese government forces. The video report chalked up about 1 million views on Facebook and 135,000 views on YouTube, some of the heaviest traffic seen on a hard-news story for the service.

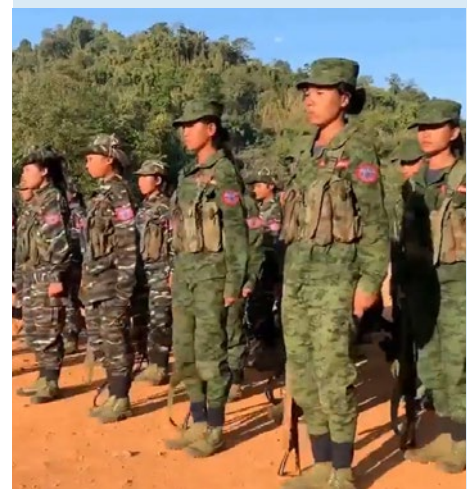


Image from RFA Burmese's video of the training camp and headquarters of the insurgent Arakan Army.

Both [RFE/RL'S RUSSIAN SERVICE](#) and [CURRENT TIME](#) provided live coverage when nearly 1,400 people were detained during a July opposition rally in Moscow. Russian state media largely ignored the subsequent protests in Moscow and half a dozen other Russian cities and ensuing crackdowns. Current Time's content, plus [selected highlights](#), were viewed more than 6.6 million times. RFE/RL Russian Service's reporting received some 4 million video views of protest-related content in just 24 hours.

[RFA](#) and [VOA'S CHINA BRANCH](#) together provided comprehensive coverage of demonstrations in Hong Kong over a proposed extradition law, as outside media reporters were heavily censored in China. Over eight days in June, VOA Mandarin produced over 70 social media videos that were viewed 3 million times on Twitter alone. As the protests grew and intensified, VOA expanded its coverage, carrying live streaming with commentary for up to 10 hours a day during weekend protests. In all, more than 30 staff in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Washington were involved in the coverage—from reporting to production and technical operations—resulting in



A protester holds an umbrella, a symbol of Hong Kong's democracy movement, against a line of officers outside the police headquarters in Hong Kong on June 21, 2019. (AP Photo/Vincent Yu)

more than 25 hours of Hong Kong-devoted programming weekly. The coverage in Washington keyed on Congressional reaction to the crisis with more than a dozen members of Congress and Senators interviewed. During the week of September 15, VOA Mandarin provided extensive coverage of visits by Hong Kong pro-democracy activists to the U.S. Congress and Capitol Hill. Online traffic to VOA Mandarin's coverage of the unrest from Hong Kong more than doubled, indicating the thirst for impartial, comprehensive news on the situation. Similarly, RFA's Mandarin and Cantonese

Services collaborated closely for round-the-clock coverage when the protests broke out in June 2019. RFA reporters on the ground put themselves on the front lines of the protests in order to speak with protesters and shoot video that garnered millions of views on social media.

[RFE/RL'S RADIO FARDA](#) provided extensive reporting on the [Iranian government's announcement](#) of a 300-percent increase in domestic gasoline prices on November 15; the resulting [widespread protests](#); and the [government's deadly crackdown](#) on the protests, which

has also been marked by a [near-complete shutdown](#) of the internet in Iran. Radio Farda reporting also [showed discrepancies](#) between the government's announcement of just six fatalities and the true death toll. Similarly, **VOA'S PERSIAN SERVICE** saw extraordinary growth in digital users in 2019 as Iranians turned to VOA as an unbiased source of news. In the wake of the Iranian regime's internet shutdown of October/November 2019, VOA Persian saw a spike in social media usage, with Instagram interactions growing from 40 million in 2018 to 106 million in 2019.

RADIO MARTÍ reported live from protests in Columbia, Venezuela, and Florida after the Venezuelan military set ablaze humanitarian aid intended for the people of Venezuela. **VOA'S SPANISH SERVICE** was the first media outlet to interview on camera a Venezuelan military defector, drawing more than 270,000 views on Facebook. The service's exhaustive coverage of the crisis in Venezuela was picked up by media outlets in all 17 of the Americas' countries. The service has provided extensive coverage of anti-government protests in Nicaragua providing an alternative to government-censored content.

RFE/RL was the only media outlet to cover the September 21 protests against China's influence in Kazakhstan live on YouTube and Facebook, in which police detained dozens of people in Kazakhstan's two largest cities, Nur-Sultan and Almaty. AFP was among the international media outlets that used Kazakh Service coverage.

RFE/RL'S TAJIK AND KYRGYZ SERVICES joined forces to cover armed clashes that broke out on

the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on July 22. The [cross-service reporting](#) helped provide audiences with [objective and well-balanced information](#) about the events. The quality of the Tajik and Kyrgyz Services' content was [praised as "balanced" by The New Reporter](#) in its review of local media's coverage of the clashes. Reporting was used by numerous regional media outlets.



A youth, right, who was injured in clashes with Venezuelan National Guardsmen blocking the entry of U.S.-supplied humanitarian aid on the Simon Bolivar International Bridge, is carried by medics to a safe zone in La Parada, Colombia, February 25, 2019, on the border with Venezuela. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

Impartial Coverage of Elections

In the hyper-partisan environment of international presidential elections, USAGM networks are often the only source of impartial coverage.



Political advertising of Anatoliy Hrytsenko and Petro Poroshenko. Photo by Serhil Nuzhnenko/
RadioSvoboda.org (RFE/RL)

RFE/RL'S UKRAINIAN SERVICE launched a fact-checking project [#ВибориБезБрехні](#) ([#ElectionsWithoutLies](#)), uniting prominent Ukrainian media. Every week key presidential candidates were fact-checked, and the refutation of their quotes were published at the same time by different media outlets. Project participants included Ukraine's influential news site [Ukrainska Pravda](#), the popular site for Russian-speaking audiences [Novoye Vremya](#), the English-language newspaper "[Kyiv Post](#)," Ukraine's main fact-checking project [VoxCheck](#), and independent TV channel and news site [Hromadske TV](#).

Media outlets relied on VOA's coverage also to get U.S. official views and reactions as well as [voting](#) in the diaspora. The service conducted 18 interactives from Washington and London with [RFE/RL](#) and affiliates, including leading Ukrainian TV channels.

[ALHURRA TELEVISION](#) and [MAGHREB VOICES](#) covered extensively Tunisia's second free presidential election. Alhurra had correspondents in Tunis, Tataouine, and Sousse to survey voters as they went to the polls and provided viewers with insights into Tunisian citizens' concerns. Leading up to Election Day, Alhurra had in-depth reporting on issues most important to Tunisians, such as lack of fresh water in some areas and the fight against terrorism, and their expectations from a new president. The network also reported on security precautions taking place to ensure voters' safety.

[ALHURRA](#) and [MAGHREB VOICES](#) counted down to Election Day in Algeria, with live updates from across the country. On Election Day, Alhurra and Maghreb Voices were on the streets with extensive coverage of voting and the clashes that took place between security forces and protesters. Alhurra reported on the hundreds of protesters who rejected the election's results and arrived in the center of Algiers amid a large security presence. The network also interviewed young people involved in the protests to report their opinions about the upcoming election.

RFE/RL'S AFGHAN SERVICE

had correspondents in 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces reporting on Afghanistan's presidential elections. Incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah [both claimed victory](#), in a scene reminiscent of the last vote in 2014.

Kazakhstan's longtime president, Nursultan Nazarbayev surprised many with his March announcement that he was resigning after nearly three decades in power and millions turned to **RFE/RL'S KAZAKH SERVICE**. Its [reporting](#) scored more than 7 million views on YouTube and its coverage was republished at least 50 times in local and foreign media.

Final results of the Nigerian election were broadcast live on Facebook and reported first on **VOA HAUSA** radio. Throughout the election, more than two dozen reporters delivered around-the-clock updates in Hausa, English, French, and Swahili for VOA radio and television programs and for affiliates in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Ghana.

Telling America's Story**"AFTER PARKLAND"**

One year after the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., that killed 14 teenagers and three coaches, VOA released a five-part series on survivors, their advocacy efforts, and the larger discussion on gun rights in the U.S.

**IMPEACHMENT INVESTIGATION**

VOA provided its audiences with unbiased and impartial coverage of the investigation into President Trump and subsequent articles of impeachment drawn up by the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition to timely reporting, VOA [helped its foreign audiences understand the procedures with a timeline of events, and explainers](#).



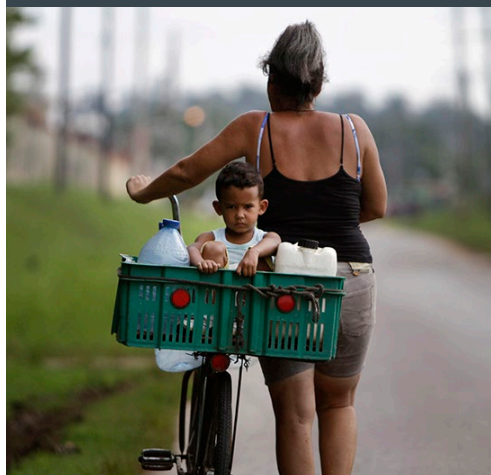
Unique Programming

USAGM networks in 2019 provided unique programming and in-depth investigations in countries where regimes try to muzzle the press.

IRAN: On March 5, VOA in cooperation with RFE/RL unveiled [VOA 365](#), a 24/7 Persian language network that aims to confront the Iranian regime's disinformation efforts with content that informs Iranian audiences and the Persian-speaking diaspora around the world. Programs include "Chess," a roundtable discussion focusing on the Tehran regime's violations, and "Straight Talk," a series that shares views from Iranian audiences and the diaspora. VOA Persian focuses on the administration's foreign policy towards Iran and the greater Middle East and covers events important to Iranians from the perspective of the United States, airing them live with real-time simultaneous translations on VOA 365.



CURRENT TIME provided online screening of Russian director Vitaly Mansky's critically acclaimed documentary "[Putin's Witnesses](#)." The film uses exclusive footage to detail Vladimir Putin's ascent to power in 1999–2000.



*A child rides in a basket on the back of a bicycle pushed by his mother in El Rincón, Cuba.
(AP Photo/Franklin Reyes)*

CUBA: The Office of Cuba Broadcasting's Radio and TV Martí began several new programs in 2019 that allow Cubans to hear and see for themselves reports about the government's human rights violations and efforts underway there to bring democracy to Cuba. The new programs include "Surcos de Libertad" (Furrows of Freedom) and "Alternativas" (Alternatives).

RUSSIA: RFE/RL's Russian Service kicked off a new regional reporting project, called [Sever.Realii](#) (Northern Realities), covering all of northwestern Russia—including St. Petersburg, Murmansk, Petrozavodsk, and Kaliningrad—aimed at providing reliable and locally focused reporting for the region's audiences.

VOA'S RUSSIAN SERVICE broadcast two original documentary products around major anniversaries—the [30th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall](#) and the [50th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Launch](#). The films aired on Current Time with English subtitles and provided eyewitness accounts and facts to counter various disinformation and conspiracy theories related to these events.

CHINA: RFA Mandarin's video team spent four months producing a series called "Gray Rhino" that focused on the under-reported risks of the Chinese government's mounting debts and housing policies at a time when state-controlled media pushed out misleading information. The [four videos together](#) earned over 250,000 views, 2,800 likes and over 1,000 comments on YouTube. VOA Mandarin significantly expanded live television coverage

of the monthslong Hong Kong pro-democracy protests. In the first three months after demonstrations broke out in June, VOA Mandarin's YouTube channel had over 50 million views and over 1.2 million engagements.

INDONESIA: VOA Indonesia produced a documentary that takes an in-depth look at the press in Papua, an area in Indonesia that has been shaped by violence for more than 50 years. The reporting calls attention to the challenges local, national, and international press face getting to the truth about issues affecting Papua, where indigenous people continue to seek for independence. The issues are so contentious that any reporting done on the region is faced with suspicions and often intimidation from all sides.

VENEZUELA: As part of the ongoing coverage of the crisis in Venezuela, VOA's Spanish Service followed the perils of Venezuelan refugees who journeyed hundreds of kilometers on foot to Colombia looking for better opportunities. The service also published a four-part series that looked at second-generation Venezuelans with Spanish roots returning to Spain. Part one of that series scored nearly 30,000

page views. The service launched the weekly multimedia program "Venezuela360" in September, which includes U.S. foreign policy, information about the Venezuelan diaspora, the refugee crisis, and in-depth analysis of the humanitarian, social and economic crises in the country. The program also serves as a bridge between Venezuelans inside and outside the country. Following the launch of this program, research was conducted (in late 2019), confirming that VOA reaches 16% weekly of the adult population in Venezuela, an unprecedented high.

VOA produced "**HELL AND HOPE**," a documentary about the lives of Yazidi girls who ISIS terrorists abducted, raped, and tortured in 2014 from Sinjar province in Iraq. Yazidis are a Kurdish religious group living chiefly in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. VOA coverage included traveling to Germany to record interviews with a few of the girls who managed to escape captivity.

Other new USAGM programming in 2019 delivered content often overlooked by other media. In February, Current Time premiered "[Asia 360](#)," a weekly series produced by RFE/RL that allows viewers to see what real life is like in the countries of Central Asia —

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

MIDDLE EAST: In July, Alhurra Television launched “Word of Truth,” a program dedicated to addressing all forms of censorship. Each week, it shines a spotlight on issues dealing with human rights and freedom of speech, topics not normally found in the Arabic media.

VOA BURMESE TV officially began airing in Burma. Within three hours of the inaugural June 24 broadcast of VOA Burmese TV on Mizzima Media Co. Ltd., 1,800 people signed up for the VOA mobile app.

VOA LEARNING ENGLISH in partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees trained volunteer teachers at the Rohingya Refugee Camp in Bangladesh and distributed VOA Learning English content. The team also worked with American University in Kabul to distribute Learning English content and train Afghan English teachers.

RFE/RL resumed news coverage for audiences in EU member states **ROMANIA** and **BULGARIA** after closing its doors there more than a decade ago. Both the [Bulgarian](#)

[and Romanian Services were relaunched as digital operations](#) in January in response to declining media pluralism in both countries, and quickly made their mark. In July, the Romanian Service exposed the police mismanagement of a kidnapping and murder of a 15-year-old girl; the service’s Facebook Live reports from the protest about the case received more than 500,000 views. The Bulgarian Service team secured major headlines in its initial weeks with a report published in partnership with the Anti-Corruption Fund disclosing suspiciously below-market luxury apartment sales to members of Bulgaria’s ruling GERB party. “Apartmentgate,” as the scandal became known, sparked an investigation by local prosecutors that led to the resignations of several high-level officials; the investigation was picked up by all local media outlets. After receiving Congressional approval in September 2019, RFE/RL is returning to the Hungarian media market as well, with a target launch for the renewed Hungarian Service in the fall of 2020.

The **MIDDLE EAST BROADCASTING**

NETWORKS in 2019 partnered with the nonprofit group Ideas Beyond Borders (IBB) to create [exclusive video content](#) based on translations of select IBB articles and books while **RADIO SAWA** [relaunched its stream](#) targeting the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Other original content lets audiences understand complex news of the day. **VOA BOSNIAN SERVICE**’s five-part documentary series, “The Game: The Life of Migrants and Refugees,” followed those who were trying to reach the European Union through Bosnia-Herzegovina.

RFA’S LAO SERVICE kept the spotlight on the local impact of land appropriation for a foreign investment project. Fifteen residents of the Yeub village in remote Sekong province were arrested for protesting a Vietnamese rubber plantation that had dispossessed them of land they once farmed. One died in custody and most were held without trial.

Telling America's Story

"OUR AMERICAN STORY"

This VOA Russian documentary about the diaspora community in the U.S. is distributed on Current Time and social media. One episode told the story of Alex Shulchev D'Jamoos, a disabled and abandoned Russian orphan who was adopted by a family in Dallas, Texas. Now grown, he is pursuing a law degree at Boston University and realizing his dream of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.



"WORTH OF A GIRL"

VOA's sweeping multimedia project that examines child marriage around the world included the story of an American teen married to a man nearly as old as her father. The piece was one of more than a dozen vignettes that together explored the practice and impact of child marriage. VOA journalists from 12 language services traveled to sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America to hear and record the stories.



Telling America's Story



Hisham Melhem, host of Huna America, chats with Monticello Curator Emilie Johnson.

“HUNA AMERICA”

Alhurra produced “Huna America,” a six-part limited series that highlighted prominent people, events, and locations that helped shape America. The program spoke with historians and experts who shed a light on events that made the U.S. what it is today. Topics included a profile of Thomas Jefferson, the Constitutional Convention of 1789, and the Civil War.

ALHURRA MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF APOLLO 11 MISSION

Alhurra provided special coverage commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission—the first manned lunar landing. The network highlighted the significance of this historic event that captivated the world including how the Apollo astronauts achieved the landing, and how NASA is preparing to do so again. Viewers heard directly from experts, scientists, and others who shared previously untold stories about the journey to the lunar surface. Through interviews with Arab-Americans who contribute to NASA’s space exploration, Alhurra shed light on the role they play and the mark they make on the space program.

Astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin Jr., lunar module pilot of the first lunar landing mission, poses for a photograph beside the deployed United States flag during Apollo 11 extravehicular activity (EVA) on the lunar surface; July 20, 1969. (NASA)



A Forum for Discussion

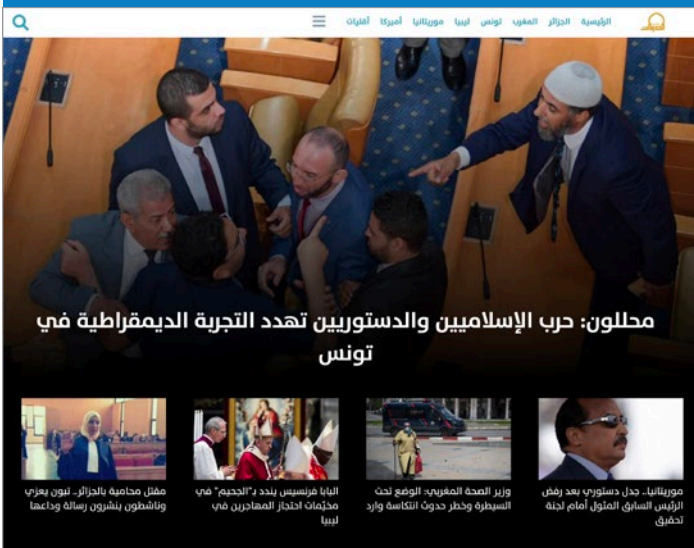
USAGM networks also provide platforms for people to discuss topics that otherwise would be impossible in their own countries, often because of government opposition.



For the first time in its history, **RADIO AND TELEVISION MARTÍ** presented a two-hour live program in Miami inviting members of the Cuban exile and Cuban community in the diaspora to directly address the people of Cuba, the opposition, and civil society. Participants of “Cuba 2019 Open Forum: Exile Speaks to Cuba” discussed the current situation in Cuba and hopes for the future of the country.

Former political prisoner Jorge Luis García Pérez, known as “Antúnez,” journalist Ninaska Pérez Castellón, and then OCB Director Tomás Regalado at the Cuba 2019 Open Forum on March 9, 2019.

In 2019 MBN's Maghreb Voices audiences were much more engaged on Facebook, as measured by weekly engagement metrics, than competitors' audiences.



In Eurasia, RFE/RL'S TAJIK SERVICE asked its Instagram followers about their perceptions of corruption. More than 400 comments disputed the Interior Ministry's assessment that found a high level of trust in the government.

In 2019, **SAWA-IRAQ**'s radio stream expanded the network's call-in program "What's Your Opinion" from one to two hours every weekday, allowing even more Iraqis to speak up and share their points of view. "What's Your Opinion" focuses on topics that impact the everyday lives of the Iraqi people and encourages them to explore possible solutions to the issues facing Iraq.

A key feature of **MBN'S MAGHREB VOICES** is going out to the streets of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania to interview citizens to discuss important issues. In 2019, tumult in Algeria and Libya were top features.

MAGHREB VOICES and **ALHURRA**'s daily newscasts focused on the mass demonstrations in March against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term and the constitutional crisis that followed. The website afforded Algerians the opportunity to speak out and share how families protested together. Maghreb Voices also followed Algerian protesters who took to the streets of Washington, D.C., to show solidarity with the movement in Algeria.

MBN likewise offered a forum for the people of Libya to share

their thoughts about the violence surrounding the Libyan capital of Tripoli, as the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army launched a major offensive to capture the capital. Maghreb Voices took an in-depth examination of the Libyan clashes reporting on the day-to-day activities surrounding the battle for Tripoli. The website tracked and reported on social media reaction. Alhurra likewise had in-depth coverage.

Elsewhere in Africa, **VOA'S HAUSA SERVICE** held a voter education town hall in Abuja ahead of Nigerian presidential elections February 16. The event, which was streamed [live](#) on the service's Facebook page and covered by local media, gave political party representatives the opportunity to engage with voters. Among the attendees were women, non-profits, and youth groups.

Tanzanian Ambassador Wilson Masilingi joined Member of Parliament Tundu Lissu in a debate broadcast [live](#) on VOA's "**STRAIGHT TALK AFRICA**" in English and Swahili. Lissu was shot 16 times during a 2017 assassination attempt and blames the government. Masilingi says the incident is still under investigation. Their exchange reached over 197,000 people on Facebook with nearly 4,000 comments.

And in Zimbabwe, **VOA'S STUDIO7** was described as an "example of a radio station promoting tolerance and dialogue" by the Zimbabwe Ministry of Information's Permanent Secretary. That was the first time the Zimbabwean government praised the VOA Zimbabwe Service after years of being considered a threat to national security by the previous administration led by Robert Mugabe.

In Latin America, **VOA'S SPANISH SERVICE** serves as a bridge between local communities and diasporas in the U.S. with audiences throughout Latin and Central America. Issues include corruption, remittances, and immigration. The service formed a WhatsApp group where Venezuelans share ideas and comment on programming and issues of interest. The service produced a segment on Venezuelan-born university engineering students at Harvard University and students at Central University of Venezuela in Caracas who are working together on energy projects for the Venezuela of the future.

In Asia, one of the most popular features of the **RFA KHMER SERVICE**'s programming are its live talk shows that help foster open debate in Cambodia's restricted political

and media environments. Acting opposition leader Sam Rainsy was a guest in February. Speaking from his self-imposed exile in Paris, he vowed to return to Cambodia to challenge Prime Minister Hun Sen. The show attracted 10,200 live viewers on Facebook and YouTube—more than double the average.

Local merchants were able to turn to [RFA'S LAO SERVICE](#) to voice their opposition to a multi-billion-dollar Chinese tourism development project slated for 22 villages north of the capital, Vientiane. The service broke the news in early March that the provincial governor had called a halt to land surveys that had begun in three villages.

[RFE/RL'S MOLDOVAN SERVICE](#), using a grant from the U.S. Embassy, is in the second year of its AntiNostalgia multimedia project that addressed topics such as Soviet-era collaboration, disinformation then and now, the role of religion in society, and the Soviet-era deportations of Moldovan citizens.

Telling America's Story

To mark the 400th anniversary of the first African slaves arriving in English-speaking America, VOA reporters traveled to [Angola](#) to examine one of the origins of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its lingering impact and to [Rhode Island](#) to speak with descendants of slave traders. Then, on August 22, VOA and Norfolk State University hosted an international [town hall](#) to discuss the roots of slavery in the United States and its lasting impact on the country. Coverage of the town hall and other related events aired in English, French, Hausa, Amharic, Portuguese, Shona, Ndebele, Somali, and Swahili.



AMER
OF SLAV

RFE/RL'S MACEDONIAN UNIT's coverage of the first round of presidential elections in North Macedonia included two videos that resonated with audiences across Facebook and Instagram. One video asked people [what they would change if they were president](#) and another asked the same question to [youth](#).

In areas where radio is still a popular medium for audiences, RFE/RL language services host call-in shows that allow audiences to share their views about topics that mainstream media don't cover. In Iran, RFE/RL's **RADIO FARDA** hosts "The Sixth Hour," a regular live radio call-in program that addresses topics of interest to Iranian audiences. In

Afghanistan, RFE/RL's **RADIO FREE AFGHANISTAN** serves audiences with the "In Search of Loved Ones" call-in program, which has helped reunite families who have been dislocated in the wake of violence or war. In Pakistan, RFE/RL's **RADIO MASHAAL** has several call-in shows and is mindful that women in conservative Pashtun society are restricted from calling live programs. Its program "In the Name of Mashaal" allows women to share their views by safely recording their comments anonymously.

In South Asia, **VOA AFGHAN** hosted two town hall-type events in 2019. Roya Rahmani, Afghanistan's first female ambassador to the U.S. participated taking questions

about the Afghan peace process, presidential elections, and the role of women. The live event generated tens of thousands of views and comments on VOA's Dari and Pashto Facebook pages, and some of Ambassador Rahmini's comments were quoted in the Afghan media.

Reflects Underrepresented Voices

USAGM networks provide an important public service by representing those often overlooked in media, including women, ethnic and religious minorities, and the LGBT community.

Reflects Women's Voices

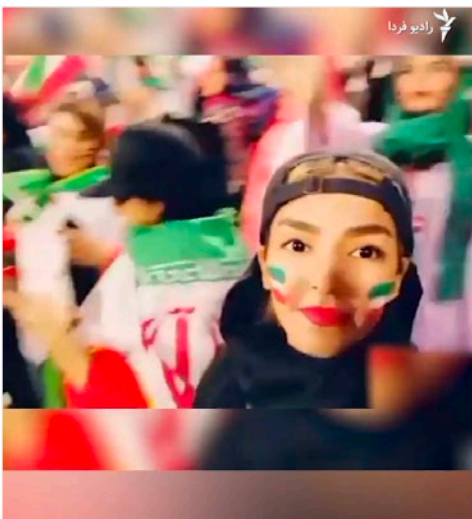


In this photo taken August 22, 2012, inmates stand during a morning inspection at a women's prison in Sarapul, central Russia. (AP Photo/Yuri Tutov)

A [series](#) of stories on the use of slave labor in women's prisons in Russia's Mordovia Republic came from the [RFE/RL TATAR BASHKIR SERVICE's](#) Russian-language Idel.Realii project.



"Today Venezuelan women live like their grandmothers used to live in the 19th Century," activist Luisa Kislinger told VOA SPANISH. A [Facebook](#) post featuring a Venezuelan woman talking to VOA about the blackout that affected her country for seven days garnered more than 500,000 views.



[RADIO FARDA](#) covered the historic decision to allow Iranian women to attend a men's soccer match in an Iranian stadium for the first time in 40 years — although only 4,000 of the 70,000 seats were allocated to women. A social video from Farda attracted more than 127,000 views on Instagram; another Farda social video on the match was watched nearly 100,000 times.

RFA BURMESE looked at how human traffickers recruit women from Burma as brides for Chinese men and to serve as birth surrogates. “Before I could see it, the baby was taken away,” one woman told RFA in a video that generated more than 650,000 views on Facebook in the Burmese version.

An [article about bride kidnapping](#) in **KYRGYZSTAN** was read more than 200,000 times on **CURRENT TIME**’s website.

VOA INDONESIAN issued a report in May 2019 on child marriage that put a spotlight on the issue and was cited by members of the Indonesian parliament. VOA reporter Eva Mazrieva was invited to a parliamentary deliberation to discuss her findings. Five months later, the legislature passed a law to raise the country’s legal age of marriage for girls from 16 to 19.

In 2019 protests broke out across the Middle East as citizens stood up to government corruption and

mismanagement. **MBN** put special emphasis on the participation of women in the protests.

In Afghanistan, where one quarter of the seats in Afghanistan’s parliament must be held by women, **RFE/RL’S RADIO FREE AFGHANISTAN** [reported](#) in English, Dari, and Pashto on the abuse and harassment that women faced on the campaign trail.

Domestic violence was the focus of an episode of **VOA TIBETAN**’s “Women Transforming,” a new radio-TV program. “Domestic violence is prevalent among Tibetans, but is rarely discussed openly,” Dr. Tenzin Dolsel said in the program, which also featured Dr. Kunga Norzom and Tibetan-American mental health experts.

For women in Cuba, **RADIO MARTÍ** launched a new daily radio program called “De Mujer a Mujer” (“From Women to Women”) that covers culture, music, health, sports, history, and news.

Across its network, VOA rolled out the **50:50 PROJECT**, a VOA-BBC partnership to promote equitable gender representation in programming by counting appearances and analyzing data. Begun as a five-show pilot, enrollment has tripled, and growth continues.

In East Africa, VOA’s **“OUR VOICES”** encourages African women to speak out about serious issues that affect their lives and their futures. The show has four core hosts—all women—from different corners of the continent, representing different cultural, religious, and socio-political backgrounds. The weekly television program traveled to Kenya for a co-production with affiliate partner KTN about women finding a balance between the demands of home and work, and to Uganda for a co-production with affiliate partner NBS on social media taxes and press freedoms.

Reflects Ethnic and Religious Minorities' Voices



VOA'S BANGLA SERVICE in July launched a 30-minute Rohingya-language radio program called "Lifeline" for Rohingya refugees in camps in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. The program focuses on the lives and needs of the refugees and offers them the opportunity to share their stories, extend greetings to their families, and learn about the hazards of joining extremist groups. **VOA'S BURMESE SERVICE** plays a critical role as well, in offering balanced and comprehensive coverage of the conflict while local media cannot, and in promoting civil discourse; many local journalists who have reported on the armed conflict have been charged with anti-terrorism acts.

A **CURRENT TIME ASIA** social-media [video](#) about the Lyuli, a Roma people who live in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, garnered 837,000 views on Facebook. Meanwhile the RFE/RL Belarus Service coverage of the treatment of the Roma community included a [blog](#) about how the treatment of Roma can be seen as a reflection of the Belarusian police state.

Roma men hug loved ones after being released from detentions in May 2019 in Belarus. They were detained after the death of a traffic patrol officer was alleged to have been carried out by Roma.



RFA UYGHUR had several exclusive stories, including China's transfer of Uyghur detainees to Shaanxi and Gansu provinces and the detention of prominent Uyghur musician Abdurehim Heyit whose life and purported death prompted a diplomatic row between Turkey and China.

ALHURRA TELEVISION was one of the few media outlets in the Middle East to report on the plight of Uyghurs in China. Most media outlets in the region are reluctant to address this issue because of Chinese investments in the Middle East. Alhurra coverage includes statements by Uyghur activists who had documented presence of 500 camps and remarks made by U.S. government officials condemning the crisis. "Alhurra Investigates" dedicated an episode to Uyghurs, interviewing former prisoners and human rights activists.

Several news organizations followed the plight of a Chinese-born businessman who fled China and was refused entry to Kazakhstan and turned away by Uzbek authorities only after **VOA'S MANDARIN SERVICE** reported it first.

VOA spent much of 2019 covering refugee issues and reaching displaced communities. Regular coverage supplemented special projects in the Balkans, Bangladesh, Venezuela, and beyond.

On June 20, 2019 — World Refugee Day — **VOA** deployed more than 100 journalists simultaneously in more than 40 locations around the globe to capture "A Day in the Life of a Refugee." This upcoming documentary film seeks to give a voice to forcibly displaced populations while showcasing VOA's unique ability to capture the breadth and depth of a complex crisis that touches every corner of the world.

Chukchis, an indigenous people inhabiting the Chukchi Peninsula and the shores of the Chukchi Sea and the Bering Sea receive little in-depth TV coverage in Russia. **CURRENT TIME's** "Unknown Russia" focused on the country's easternmost town of Anadyr, home to a large community of ethnic Chukchis. The [episode](#) received more than 670,000 views on YouTube.

A recent **RFE/RL TATAR BASHKIR SERVICE** [interview](#) with Mari rights advocate Georgy Pirogov for the service's Idel.Realii project [triggered a public discussion](#) in Russia's Mari El Republic over the government's efforts to prepare a development strategy for the Mari ethnic group, who make up two fifths of the republic's population.

RFE/RL'S ARMENIAN SERVICE traveled to Verin Dvin, a village about 35 kilometers south of the capital Yerevan, for its "[Inside the Village](#)" program showcasing the lives of Armenia's Assyrian community, which is the third largest ethnic minority in the country.

ALHURRA TELEVISION in April provided a bridge between the Arabic and Kurdish cultures by co-sponsoring the 14th annual Erbil International Book Fair in Kurdistan, Iraq, which drew attendees from more than 30 countries.

Telling America's Story



VOA SOMALI was there when 60-year-old Falhad Mohamud Ahmed got her degree from George Mason University in Virginia. “One thing my dad said to me was when you go to the United States you make sure you get your education,” she said after graduating alongside her 28-year-old daughter. The video interview attracted nearly 200,000 views and over 800 comments on Facebook.

VOA SERBIAN traveled to Massachusetts to tell the American story of Zorica Pantic, who was born in the former Yugoslavia, and who recently retired as the dean of the Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston. Pantic was the first female engineer to lead an institute of technology in the U.S. May 9 was designated as Zorica Pantic Day in Boston.



ALHURRA TELEVISION highlighted the journey of Arab-Americans in “My Story.” The weekly series profiled Arab-Americans who left their homeland to start a better life in the U.S. Viewers got firsthand accounts of the challenges and triumphs they faced seeking opportunities in a new country that offered them refuge and opportunity. The program highlighted Arab-Americans in a variety of fields including in the world of business, the arts, civic leaders, and scientists.

Reflects LGBT and Disabled Persons' Voices



CURRENT TIME obtained independent proof of reports of a renewed crackdown against LGBT people in Chechnya. RFE/RL's Russian Service, and Kavkaz.Realii (the Russian-language reporting project run by RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service) also reported on the revelations and the Chechen government's denial that any such campaign was underway.

VOA'S SPANISH SERVICE offers diverse voices and in 2019 profiled Guatemalan actor Juan Pablo Olyslager, who denounced the use of “conversion therapies” for homosexuals in Latin America, and Argentinian Juani Rodriguez Abadie who has gained social media followers with her upbeat attitude and posts about inclusion. Her leg was amputated at the age of 18 and she uses a prosthetic.



Juani Rodriguez Abadie

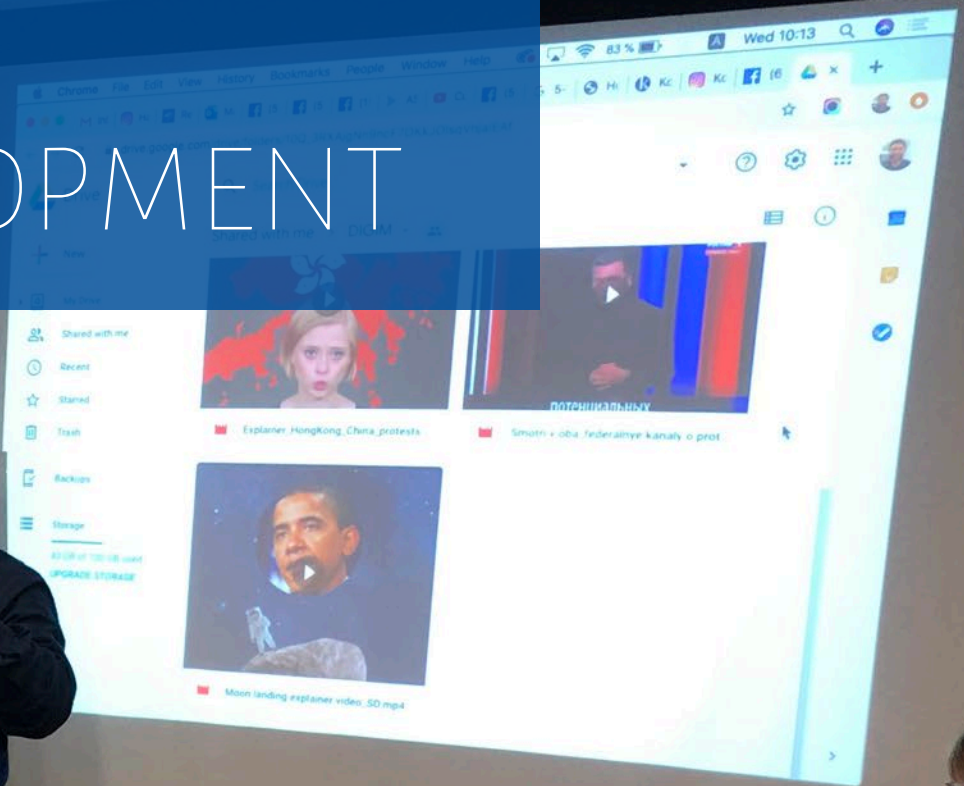
In July, **RADIO MARTÍ** created the first and only program in Radio Martí's history to address LGBT issues. “Arcoiris,” which means rainbow, hosted by Joe Cardona, gives the LGBT community in Cuba a voice to express their goals and



Joe Cardona

concerns and connect them with the Cuban-American and LGBT communities in the U.S. and the world. The weekend program has proven popular and listening groups have popped up around the island, and the program was featured in the gay and lesbian newspaper “The Washington Blade.”

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT



USAGM trained nearly 1,000 international media practitioners around the world in 2019, focusing on digital skills, fact-checking, investigative reporting, and newsroom management. USAGM's training supports the agency's efforts to distribute content on affiliate stations by building relationship with media executives and their staff.

For the first time in nearly two decades, USAGM trainers were permitted to train journalists in Uzbekistan. Trainers from Current Time and VOA's Uzbek Service helped about 30 reporters hone their reporting skills and make good use of new technologies and apps. Like journalists worldwide, many Uzbeks have adopted digital technologies, and reporters are keen to make use of new technology to reach audiences.

USAGM participated in workshops that provides fact-checking tools in Albania, Moldova, North Macedonia, and Greece.

Valentina Caledju, chief editor of Gagauz Media in Comrat, Moldova, said her fact-checking fellowship at VOA has showed her how to "present evidence in a clear way and how to make articles more credible." Moldova, a small country between Ukraine and Russia, has been bombarded with Russian propaganda.

Investigative reporting was a hot topic as reporters sought to expose corruption and malfeasance among government officials and gain access to documents. In North Macedonia, Cameroon, and Cote D'Ivoire journalists learned to use programs to help quantify data.

In Tanzania and Ethiopia, journalists focused on how to cover elections fairly and how to inform voters objectively about the issues.

Somali journalists looked at ways to better deliver information about polio in their country, one of the few remaining countries where the disease still exists.

In Venezuela, where the government periodically shuts down the internet, journalists learned more about circumvention tools and cybersecurity.

Besides conducting workshops, USAGM signed partnerships that allow the agency to exchange ideas and content with journalistic organizations like IREX and the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network.



OUTREACH & RESEARCH

Attendees at USAGM's Media for Democracy Forum.

In 2019 the agency hosted several public events to highlight the impact that is being made around the world and demonstrate its good stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars.



U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) gives the keynote address Re-Engaging in the Information Battlefield at the Media for Democracy Forum on May 7, 2019.

Media for Democracy Forum

On May 7, USAGM’s Media for Democracy Forum at the U.S. Institute of Peace brought together media experts, practitioners, opinion leaders, and policy makers to identify solutions to the biggest threats facing free media. Attendees also explored information technology trends in journalism today.

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), U.S. Representative Chris Stewart (R-UT) and technology policy expert and author Alec Ross addressed forum attendees at a critical juncture as both news media and democratic institutions are increasingly challenged around the world.

Senator Cruz said, “That’s something that America should remember: that our principles can tear down walls. America should consistently be a voice for freedom, human rights, and democracy.” He continued. “Because that truth is powerful, and it can transform the world. That’s where USAGM comes into play.”

Representative Stewart noted, “... it was the First Amendment that talks about a free press. If you lose this, you lose everything else. Our Founding Fathers understood that.”

The Media for Democracy Forum also brought together representatives from the National Endowment for

Democracy, Freedom House, The Atlantic Council, The Hudson Institute, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Agency for International Development, IREX, CNN, Deutsche Welle, University of Southern California, among other prominent government and civil society experts and groups.

By identifying best practices and opportunities for collaboration across sectors, the inaugural forum helped to forge a community of practice in support of publicly supported, civic-focused international media. A forthcoming white paper will draw from the forum's conversations to identify opportunities for cooperation and to propose next steps to energize the ways in which media and technology can help bolster the world's democratic societies.



U.S. Representative Chris Stewart (R-UT) gives the closing keynote address Key Challenges and Next Steps at the Media for Democracy Forum.



Nicole Martin, Owner, NR Digital Consulting, and Former Contributor, Forbes, participates in Machined Media: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Journalism panel at the Media for Democracy Forum.



Thaer Soukar from MBN, second from right, speaks on the Re-imagining Journalism: Storytelling for Civic Engagement panel at the Media for Democracy Forum.

Deep Dives

The USAGM's Office of Policy and Research regularly convenes deep dive roundtables around the international media and information space in priority regional and thematic areas of great importance to U.S. national security.

For example, in light of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announcing reforms, USAGM hosted a discussion among experts on the state of Ethiopia's political landscape, the role and importance of independent media, and the challenges facing an ethnically diverse country as it prepares for multi-party elections in 2020. The event featured exclusive data from a new survey on trends in Ethiopian public opinion and media engagement.

End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists Event

On November 2, USAGM partnered with the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists for a special event discussing the problem of impunity for crimes against journalists. The panel of seasoned journalists and media experts discussed the impact of the low global conviction rate for violent crimes against journalists and media and identified possible solutions.

At that event, CPJ detailed its latest "impunity index." The report warned that 13 countries account for more than three-quarters of all unsolved murders of journalists globally. USAGM journalists work in almost all of them.



Euna Lee of VOA, center, speaks at the roundtable discussion at the End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists event, as Courtney Radsch / CPJ Advocacy Director, left, and VOA Ukrainian Service Chief Myroslava Gongadze listen.

LEADERSHIP



In 2019 the U.S. Agency for Global Media was governed by a nine-member, bipartisan board and a Chief Executive Officer.

Chief Executive Officer



JOHN F. LANSING

(until September 2019)

John F. Lansing joined USAGM as CEO and Director in September 2015. Lansing's previous experience includes nine years as President of Scripps Networks, where

he is credited with guiding the company to become a leading developer of unique content across various media platforms including television, digital, mobile and publishing.

Previously, Lansing was President and Chief Executive Officer of Cable & Telecommunications Association for Marketing (CTAM), a marketing association comprised of 90 of the top U.S. and Canadian cable companies and television programmers. There, Lansing oversaw the development of business strategies and marketing initiatives that position cable television companies for continued growth as they compete with emerging digital content platforms.

Lansing also brought a deep understanding of journalism from roles as an award-winning Photojournalist and Field Producer, Assignment Manager, Managing Editor, and News Director at several television stations earlier in his career.

After four years of service, Lansing left the agency in October 2019.



GRANT TURNER

(October 2019)

Grant Turner, who had previously served as the agency's Chief Financial Officer, was named CEO and Director on an interim basis and began serving in that

capacity on October 1, 2019.

Turner joined USAGM in February 2016 after serving for five years at the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) as Budget Director, overseeing resource management for this key U.S. foreign assistance agency. Prior to working at MCC, Turner served six years at the Office of Management and Budget—three years under President Barack Obama and three years under President George W. Bush—where he worked in the National Security Division, as well as the Office of the Deputy Director for Management.

Turner is a 1989 graduate of Brigham Young University–Hawaii and holds a Master's in Business Administration from Chaminade University of Honolulu, and a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in Boston.

Board of Governors

USAGM's [Board](#) was made up of nine members with expertise in the fields of mass communications, broadcast media, or international affairs. Eight members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The ninth, the Secretary of State, served *ex officio*. On June 8, 2020 the board of governors disbanded after the first presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed CEO took position.



**KENNETH WEINSTEIN,
CHAIRMAN**

Confirmed: September 23, 2013

*Confirmed as Chairman:
January 25, 2017*

Weinstein has been President and CEO of Hudson Institute since 2011. Since joining

Hudson Institute in 1999, he has held several other positions, including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Senior Fellow, and Director of the Washington Office. From 1996 to 1998, he was the Director of the Government Reform Project at the Heritage Foundation, and from 1994 to 1996, he was Director of Research at the New Citizenship Project. He served on the National Council of the Humanities from 2006 to 2012 and was appointed to the D.C. Advisory Board to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2010. Weinstein received a B.A. from the University of Chicago, an M.Phil. from the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.



DR. LEON ARON

Confirmed: December 12, 2014

Dr. Leon Aron is Resident Scholar and Director of Russian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a position he has held since 1993. He was a

weekly Contributor at the Voice of America's Russian language radio and television show "Gliadya iz Ameriki" (Looking from America) from 1990 to 2004.

Dr. Aron was previously an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University from 1994 to 1996 and a Senior Policy Analyst at the Heritage Foundation from 1987 to 1992. He was awarded the Peace Fellowship from the U.S. Institute of Peace from 1992 to 1993. Dr. Aron received a B.A. from Moscow State Pedagogical Institute and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Columbia University.



AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER

Confirmed: August 2013

Ambassador Ryan Crocker served as a Diplomat in Residence at Princeton University for the academic year 2017–2018 while on

a leave of absence from Texas A&M University as an Executive Professor. From 2010–2011 and 2013–2016, he served as Dean of the George Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M.

He retired from the Foreign Service in April 2009 after a career of over 37 years but was recalled to active duty by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan in 2011. He has served as U.S. Ambassador six times: Afghanistan (2011–2012), Iraq (2007–2009), Pakistan (2004–2007), Syria (1998–2001), Kuwait (1994–1997), and Lebanon (1990–1993).

He received a B.A. in English in 1971 and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 2001 from Whitman College (Washington). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Association of American Ambassadors. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Mercy Corps International and is a Trustee for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Ambassador Crocker received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, in 2009. In July 2012, he was named an Honorary Marine, the 75th civilian so honored since the founding of the Corps in 1775.



MICHAEL W. KEMPNER

Confirmed: December 12, 2014

Michael W. Kempner is the Founder, President, and CEO of MWWPR, a public relations firm he founded in 1986. He is a board member of Goodwill

Industries International and a Founding Board Member of ConnectOne Bancorp. He served on the White House Council for Community Solutions from 2010 to 2012. In 2013, he was named Agency Leader of the Year by PR News, Executive of the Year by American Business Awards, and Agency Professional of the Year and Communications Professional of the Year by Bulldog Stars of PR. Mr. Kempner received a B.S. from American University.



AMBASSADOR KAREN KORNBLUH

Confirmed: December 16, 2014

Ambassador Karen Kornbluh is a Senior Fellow and Director of German Marshall Fund's Technology Policy program which works to help

shape a future in which technology strengthens rather than undermines democratic values.

Previously, she was a Senior Fellow for Digital Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and prior, the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Nielsen, responsible for global public policy, privacy strategy, and corporate social responsibility. She served as U.S. Ambassador in Paris to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). She was Policy Director for then-Senator Barack Obama as well as serving as deputy chief of staff at the U.S. Treasury Department, and as Director of the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Federal Communications Commission in the Clinton administration. Kornbluh founded the New America Foundation's Work and Family Program and started her career as an economic forecaster and management consultant.

She has written extensively on economic, technology, and family policies in publications including *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology*. Kornbluh has a bachelor's degree from Bryn Mawr College and a Master of Public Policy degree from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.



SECRETARY MIKE R. POMPEO

Ex officio board member

Mike Pompeo was sworn in as Secretary of State on April 26, 2018. He previously served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from

January 2017 to April 2018.

Prior to joining the Trump Administration, Mr. Pompeo was serving in his fourth term as congressman from Kansas's 4th District. He served on the House Intelligence Committee, as well as the Energy and Commerce Committee and House Select Benghazi Committee.

Prior to his service in Congress, Mr. Pompeo founded Thayer Aerospace, where he served as CEO for more than a decade. He later became President of Sentry International, an oilfield equipment manufacturing, distribution, and service company.

Mr. Pompeo graduated first in his class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1986 and served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also served with the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry in the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division.

After leaving active duty, Mr. Pompeo graduated from Harvard Law School, having been an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*.

AWARDS



Zafar Bamyani of VOA's Afghan Service in front of Buddha Bamiyan in central Afghanistan.

MBN

MBN's Maghreb Voices video report was named a **finalist** at the 2019 New York Festival's Television and Film Awards in the category of Digital Short Form for **"VICTIMS OF INCEST IN MOROCCO."** The piece looks at the sensitive subject of young girls who were molested and raped by their fathers, brothers, and uncles. In the report, these

(now adult) women tell their deeply personal stories about the disbelief and horror they felt as children, as well as the lack of support from other family members and the community.

ALHURRA TELEVISION was nominated as **International Channel of the Year** for the annual **Association for International Broadcasting (AIB) awards**, a first for the network. This honor comes

nearly one year after the television network launched the largest transformation in its 15-year history, completely changing the look and feel of Alhurra.

MBN's Egypt-centric website **ELSAHA.COM** was awarded the **Multimedia Special Award** at the **2019 Egypt Press Photo Awards** for a video report entitled "The Return to Raw Photography," which examines the history and art of film photography and how some Egyptian young adults are taking it up as a "new" form of expression. The video looks at the preciseness of a photo on film (opposed to digital images) and how it can be manipulated in the dark room. The short video also addresses the challenges facing those in Egypt who are taking up this hobby, such as acquiring film.



"THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS," an Alhurra.com video profiling a Muslim woman living in the U.S., won the **People's Voice Award** in the category of Best Documentary: Short Form at the **2019 Webby Awards** and was a finalist for **Best Web Documentary** at the **Cannes Corporate Media and TV Awards**. The video profiles a Muslim woman living in the U.S. Her son, who served in the Navy, was gunned down and left for dead in the streets for \$40. She talks about the pain of losing her son and the strength her faith gave her to forgive the men who murdered her son.

RFA

RFA Khmer won a **Bronze World Medal** in the **2019 New York Festivals TV & Film Awards** in the category Human Rights reporting for its documentary, **"JUSTICE OR IMPUNITY"**. In July 1997, Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen, who at the time was second prime minister,

launched a bloody coup against the first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Hundreds were injured or killed, including at least 60 of the forces loyal to the Prince, who were executed extrajudicially. Now over two decades later, some are still fighting to bring those responsible for those murders to justice.

RFA Mandarin won the 2019 Radio & TV Digital News Association's (RTDNA) National Murrow Award for Excellence in Video and was awarded a Finalist Certificate in the New York Festivals TV & Film Awards for its special news report, **"THE WOMEN AGAINST THE STATE,"** which detailed the plight of women whose husbands were detained in China's "709" crackdown, named for the date it began on July 9, 2015, against defense lawyers and human rights defenders. Since then, more than 300 lawyers and citizens have been [arrested, summoned, and criminally detained nationwide](#). Since the crackdown, the Chinese government has continuously harassed and intimidated 709 family members using the safety, health, and sentences of those arrested as bargaining chips and

threatening their family's survival, work, and children's education.

Mandarin Digital Program Manager Alex Zhang accepted the **Silver Medal** in the News Features category on behalf of RFA for the Mandarin Service's **"GRAY RHINO"** feature at the 2019 New York Festivals Radio Awards. Released in February 2019, when many Chinese households were beginning to feel the negative effects of China's economic instability, the series took an in-depth look at major issues plaguing China's financial system, such as bad debt in the financial and government sectors, and the Chinese real estate bubble. The Mandarin Service's digital team provided clear, easy-to-understand analyses of complex issues neglected in Chinese domestic media.

RFA's Korean Service's **"NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES IN CANADA"** was also awarded a **Finalist** certificate in the News Features category in the New York Festivals Radio Awards. The three-part series highlighted different aspects of North Korean defectors' experiences seeking refugee status in Canada. The series discussed the denial of refugee status to the North Korean defectors,



Radio Free Asia's (RFA) Uyghur Service journalist **GULCHEHRA HOJA** received a **Magnitsky Human Rights Award** at a ceremony in London for her reporting on the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crisis in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Along with her colleagues in RFA's Uyghur Service, she has been at the forefront of coverage of the internment of, by many estimates, more than 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the XUAR. RFA, the only outlet outside China that has a Uyghur-language service, has received wide recognition for first reporting on the mass internments and related developments in the XUAR.

gave practical advice for refugees from experts, and showed how North Korean refugees have adapted to life and changes in Canada.

RFE/RL

RFE/RL was awarded a 2019 Edward R. Murrow Award for Multimedia in the Television Network category by the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) for “demonstrat[ing] the spirit of excellence that Murrow set” as a standard in electronic journalism. This is the first time RFE/RL has won a National Murrow Award.

The Ukrainian government nominated two Ukrainian journalists convicted in Russian-occupied Crimea—RFE/RL freelance contributor **MYKOLA SEMENA** and Ukrinform correspondent Roman Sushchenko—for the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. An English-language translation of a collection of Semena’s reporting from occupied Crimea, “A Crimean Report,” was also presented to the public at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine press center. Ukraine’s Ministry of Information Policy supported the



RFE/RL’s Kyrgyz Service was awarded the 2019 Tom Renner Award from Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) for “PLUNDER AND PATRONAGE IN THE HEART OF CENTRAL ASIA,” in conjunction with the Organized Crime And Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), and OCCRP member center Kloop. The six-part report reveals the operations of a massive underground network that funneled more than \$700 million from Kyrgyzstan that was then laundered through bank accounts and real estate investments in the United Arab Emirates, Europe, and the United States. It looked at Kyrgyz government officials’ role in facilitating the operation.

translation and publication of the book. Semena remains under a travel ban out of Crimea, following his September 2017 conviction on a charge of “separatism.”

A 360 video project titled “**THE MINE**” by the Ukrainian Service won a Bronze award in the 9th Annual Lovie Awards in the Internet Video – Virtual Reality & 360 category for



The Mine, a 360° video project by the RFE/RL Ukrainian Service

Best Narrative Experience. The project takes an intimate look at Ukrainian coal miners and their harsh working conditions.

Current Time's special documentary series "**FORMA 087**," by Katya Ponomaryova, which explores the plight of LGBT/transgender people in Russia, was **shortlisted** for a **Content Innovation Award** in the category Best Representation on Screen. Current Time is competing with projects from MTV Studios, World Productions, Sky Atlantic, Eureka Productions and Russia's Channel 5.

Belarusian Service journalists **KATSIARYNA MARKOUSKAJA** and **MAXIM LAURETSKI** were awarded **second place** for Best Story category by Belarus's Office for Rights

of People with Disabilities for their three-part video story about **VALIANTSINA KARVAT**, who suffers from epilepsy. Karvat was declared incompetent and placed under guard in a psychiatric institution after complaining that her doctor provided insufficient care.

Belarusian Service journalists **SHAHIEI SHUPA**, **ZMITSIER BARTOSIK**, and **JAN MAKSYMUIK** were lauded at the **Transparent ELO literary awards**, an inaugural competition sponsored by the online magazine LitPAZH recognizing excellence in electronic publishing and the work of Belarusian language authors. Shupa won **Best Literary Audiocast** award for his **42-EPISODE PODCAST** series on the founding of the Belarus National Republic, which uses

humor to examine archival material chronicling the emergence of an independent Belarus one century ago. Bartosik won **Best Non-Fiction E-Book** for "**THE CHINESE DENTIST'S CLINIC**," a collection of pieces about life in rural Belarusian towns and villages. Bartosik also produced 33 podcasts to accompany the book. Maksymiuk was awarded **Best Web Literature Project** for his **ONLY ON LITERATURE** Facebook group that encourages members to post original writing, comment on the work of their peers, and discuss Belarusian and foreign literature and art.

VOA

Voice of America won three medals at the **2019 New York Festivals International TV and Film Awards** ceremony at the National Association of Broadcasters. VOA's documentary "**DISPLACED**," detailing the experiences of the Rohingya Muslim refugees currently living in the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh, won a **Gold World Medal** in the International Affairs Documentary category, a **Silver World Medal** in the Best News Documentary/Special News Program category, as well as a **United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI)** special

Bronze Award. VOA contributor Greta Van Susteren and a camera crew shot the documentary in the Rohingya refugee camp last summer. VOA's digital project "**CAMBODIA ADRIFT**" was a **finalist** in the Digital Special Event category. "**DISPLACED**" and "**CAMBODIA ADRIFT**" also won **Clarion Awards**, a national competition run by the **Association for Women in Communications**. "**DISPLACED**" also received a **Gabriel Award**, winning **first place** in the **Hot Topic: Human Dignity – English Television** category and an **honorable mention** in the **Special or Documentary–Less than 60 Minutes** category.



VOA'S GEORGIAN SERVICE, along with U.S. Representatives Ted Poe (R-TX) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA), and Kenneth Angel, managing director of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC),



"The Damage Done: Living America's Opioid Nightmare"

received **Georgian Publishing House Sakhelebi's** award for their contributions to U.S.-Georgian bilateral relations. Sakhelebi is a Georgian partner of The New York Times annual project Turning Points. The award recipients were honored at a reception hosted by the Georgian Embassy at the U.S. House of Representatives Rayburn building foyer. The event also served as a celebration for the centennial anniversary of the Georgian parliament.

VOA KHMER SERVICE's investigative reporting in rural Cambodia about irregular voter registration in the

run-up to the controversial 2018 Cambodian national elections was recognized as a **finalist** for the **2019 SOPA (Society of Publishers in Asia) Award for Editorial Excellence** in the investigative reporting category.

VOA had its best showing ever in this year's **Chesapeake Associated Press Broadcasters Association** contest with **first-place finishes** in five of the 39 large-market TV and radio categories and another two second-place finishes. The winners were **CHRIS SIMKINS**, **JEFF SWICORD** and **JACQUELYN DE PHILLIPS** in the Outstanding Public Affairs category for "**THE**

DAMAGE DONE: LIVING AMERICA'S OPIOID NIGHTMARE"; **GABRIELLE WEISS** in the Outstanding Feature or Human Interest Story category for **"LOVE AND BARBEQUE"**; **STEVE BARAGONA** and **BRIAN WILLIAMSON** in the Outstanding Digital Feature Project category for **"GREENLAND IS MELTING"**; **CARLA BABB** in the Outstanding Specialty Reporting category for the military beat; **CAROLYN PRESUTTI**, **AMY KATZ** and **LORI LUNDIN** in the Outstanding Enterprise Reporting category for **"MACY'S HIJAB DEBATE."** The second-place finishers were **ERIC STUART PIANIN**, **CAROLYN PRESUTTI** and **ANAND MISTRY** in the Outstanding Digital News Project category for **"WOMEN AND THE MIDTERMS"**; and **CARLA BABB** and **BEZHAN HAMDARD** in the Outstanding Digital Feature Project category for **"REFLECTIONS ON RACE IN THE MILITARY."**

VOA's Midwest correspondent **KANE FARABAUGH** won three **Peter Lisagor awards** from the Chicago Headline Club, the Chicago chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. He took the top prize in the Best News Specialty/Business/Consumer News – Feature or Series

category for his TV series **"BETWEEN TRADE AGREEMENTS AND TARIFFS"**; in the Best News Specialty/Religious category for his TV piece **"TAHERA'S AMERICAN HIJAB"**; and in the Best Video Journalist category for his work throughout the year. He also was named the winner in the TV National Network/Cable News category at the **2019 Religion News Association Awards for Excellence in Religion Reporting** for his story **"TAHERA'S AMERICAN HIJAB."**

VOA's **"STRAIGHT TALK AFRICA"** program was honored with the Outstanding TV Series Award by the Diaspora Today CEO Forum and the Center Africa Broadcasting Network Corporation. The award was for "outstanding dedication to humanity." Program host **SHAKA SSALI** received the Diaspora Distinguished Leadership Award for his "outstanding dedication to Africa's socio economic justice" and was described as a "leading African journalist in the United States." **ZOE LEODAKI**, the producer, was presented with an **Outstanding Producer Award**.

VOA photojournalist stringer in Cairo, **HAMADA ELRASAM**, was selected for the third prize



"Straight Talk Africa" host Shaka Ssali

award in the **Egypt Press Photo 2019** competition, sponsored by Photopia Cairo, a photography school in Cairo. His winning submissions were a photo gallery titled **"EGYPT'S CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS SHOW DEVOTION TO VIRGIN MARY"** and a second photo gallery titled, **"EGYPTIAN FATHER'S TALENTS LIMITLESS, DESPITE VISUAL DISABILITY."**

VOA Macedonian Service stringer **SINISA STANKOVIC** received an award for **Professional Reporting on Refugees for 2018** in the Republic of North Macedonia from the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, in cooperation with the Association of Journalists of North Macedonia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

He was presented the award at a ceremony on June 20, World Refugee Day, in the capital, Skopje. Stankovik was recognized for web articles he produced for VOA on refugees in North Macedonia.

David Burke Awards

In December, USAGM's Board of Governors awarded journalists and staff from each of its five networks with the **David Burke Distinguished Journalism Awards**. The awards recognize courage, excellence, and professionalism in journalism and are given every year to USAGM journalists who demonstrate a commitment to providing accurate news and information that goes above and beyond.



Faheem Omer, who uses the professional name Zana Omar.

VOA recognized its Kurdish Service Qamishli-based reporter **FAHEEM OMER**, who uses the professional name **ZANA OMAR**, for his bravery and journalistic integrity in ongoing coverage of the war in Syria and

other geo-political stories in the region. Faheem's reporting in 2018 centered on the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces' operation to oust ISIS from eastern Syria.

OCB lauded award-winning documentarian and former Miami Herald columnist **JOE CARDONA** for producing and hosting "**ARCOIRIS**" ("Rainbow"), the first and only program in Radio Martí's history to address LGBTQ+ issues on the island. "Arcoiris," which premiered in July 2018, provides the LGBTQ+ community in Cuba a platform for expression and a connection point with similar communities in the United States and around the world.

RFA'S UYGHUR SERVICE was celebrated for its dedication and commitment to reporting the truth about human rights atrocities being committed against Uyghurs and other ethnic minority Muslims in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Many of the staff, if not all, have China-based relatives detained in internment camps and, in at least six cases, they were mistreated in retribution for their family members' work at RFA.



Uyghur detainees

RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan, locally known as **RADIO AZADI**, was honored for its comprehensive reporting and unwavering commitment to journalism despite suffering the tragic loss of three colleagues in a deadly suicide blast that targeted journalists in Kabul in April 2018.



Radio Azadi Kabul Staff



Radio Azadi Prague Staff

MBN'S CREATIVE SERVICES TEAM, led by **FADI IZZIDIN**, was commended for their innovative, resourceful, and impactful contributions to the successful relaunch of Alhurra Television. The team transformed productions, using leading-edge technology, to present pan-Arab audiences with contemporary, visually-engaging content.



MBN Studios

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

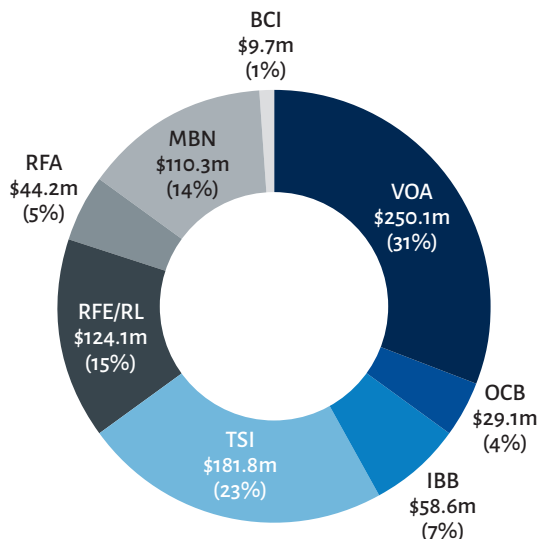


Nilofar Mughal of VOA's Urdu Service reporting from the UN, October 2019.

The independent accounting firm, Kearney & Company, conducted our fiscal year 2019 financial statement audit and issued an unmodified opinion on our Principal Financial Statements. Preparing these statements allows USAGM to improve financial management and provide accurate and reliable information to Congress, the President and the taxpayer. USAGM management is responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the financial information presented in the statements. The financial statements and financial data presented in this report have been prepared from the accounting records of USAGM in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles and incorporate the application of the standards as prescribes by the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board.

<i>(in thousands)</i>	FY 2019	FY 2018
AT THE END OF THE YEAR:		
Condensed Balance Sheet Data:		
Fund Balance with Treasury	\$ 245,805	\$ 253,742
Cash and Other Monetary Assets	3	3
Accounts Receivable	127	171
Advances to Surrogate Broadcasters	78,000	72,000
Property, Plant and Equipment	69,540	79,783
Other	1,766	874
Total Assets	\$ 395,241	\$ 406,573
Accounts Payable and Other	\$ 26,999	\$ 30,407
Retirement and Payroll	43,671	42,184
Total Liabilities	\$ 70,670	\$ 72,591
Unexpended Appropriations	\$ 269,907	\$ 266,944
Cumulative Results of Operations	54,664	67,038
Total Net Position	324,571	333,982
Total Liabilities and Net Position	\$ 395,241	\$ 406,573
FOR THE YEAR:		
Condensed Statement of Net Cost Data:		
Total Cost	\$ 832,021	\$ 798,131
Total Earned Revenue	(3,304)	(3,721)
Total Net Cost of Operations	\$ 828,717	\$ 794,410

ALLOCATION OF USAGM FY19 BUDGET





U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

330 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20237
202.203.4400 | usagm.gov